

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL HAMILTON
TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 2910
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 HAMILTON 404/1

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINT, PINS, BD

SUBJECT: COURTESY CALL ON PREMIER; MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION
REF: HAMILTON 403

1. SUMMARY: I CALLED ON PREMIER DAVID GIBBONS LAST WEEK IN ORDER TO REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON THE ISLAND DURING MY TWO-MONTH ABSENCE AND TO PROVIDE GENERAL OVERVIEW OF MY CONSULTATIONS WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICERS. TOPICS THAT I FOCUSED ON WERE RE-ACTIONS TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE PITT COMMISSION, RESULTS OF THE JUNE UNITED BERMUDA PARTY (UBP) CANVASS ON ISSUES OF INDEPENDENCE AND ELECTORAL REFORM, CONSEQUENCES OF UPROAR OVER UBP SPONSORED TELEPHONE SURVEY IN EARLY JULY (BURKE LETTER OF JULY 6, 1978) AND POSSIBILITY OF BY-ELECTIONS FOR TWO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEATS. END SUMMARY.

2. RESULTS OF NINETY-MINUTE VISIT WITH DAVID GIBBONS ON AUG 21 FOLLOW:

A. PITT COMMISSION REPORT: GIBBONS CLAIMED THAT, ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT DISTRAUGHT OVER THE FINAL REPORT, THERE WERE A FEW SURPRISES AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HE CALLED "NON-SEQUITURS". GIBBONS, WHO IS OPPOSED TO EARLY INDEPENDENCE FOR BERMUDA, TOOK PARTICULAR EXCEPTION TO THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS THAT BERMUDA "TAKES ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS A FULLY INDEPENDENT NATION". THE PREMIER STATED THAT THIS RECOMMENDATION WAS NOT SUBSTANTIATED BY EVIDENCE GATHERED, NOR MAJORITY OPINION GLEANED, DURING

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COMMISSION DELIBERATIONS HERE. ON A STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, HE INFORMED ME THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE COMMISSION'S DRAFT REPORT. HE CLAIMED THAT HE HAD LEARNED FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT THE RECOMMENDATION WAS DRAFTED BY A JUNIOR SECRETARY IN THE FOREIGN COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (FCO) AND THAT THE COMMISSION AGREED TO INCLUDE IT.

3. ON THE ISSUES OF CONSTITUTIONAL (PRINCIPALLY ELECTORAL)

REFORM ADDRESSED BY THE REPORT, THE PREMIER COMMENTED THAT SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE NON-SEQUITURS, I.E., WHILE THE REPORT STATES THAT IF THE QUALIFYING PERIOD OF RESIDENCE FOR NON-BERMUDIANS TO VOTE WERE EXTENDED FROM THE PRESENT 3-YEAR REQUIREMENT, THAT CONFLICT OVER THE FRANCHISE WOULD BE LESSENER. YET THE FINAL RECOMMENDATION IS THAT PROVISION FOR RESIDENTIAL VOTING BE BROUGHT TO AN END. IN GENERAL, THE PREMIER SAID THAT MOST OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT CONCERNED WITH HEALTH, SOCIAL WELFARE, AND BERMUDIANIZATION HAVE ALREADY BEEN ADDRESSED BY HIS GOVERNMENT.

4. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF CONVENING AN CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE BY DECEMBER 31, 1978 AS RECOMMENDED, THE PREMIER STATED THAT THE GOVERNOR HAD ALREADY APPROACHED HIM AND THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. IT IS PRESENTLY ENVISIONED THAT THE CONFERENCE BE HELD IN BERMUDA WITH LOCAL PARTICIPANTS ONLY. THE GOVERNOR WOULD PRESIDE. NO FORMAL UK REPRESENTATION WOULD BE REQUIRED, ALTHOUGH AN OBSERVER FROM FCO MIGHT BE INVITED. THE CONFERENCE WOULD ADDRESS PRINCIPALLY THE ISSUES OF ELECTORAL REFORM AND INDEPENDENCE. IF LOCAL AGREEMENT WERE REACHED, APPROVAL IS ASSURED BY THE U.K. THE PREMIER IS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT AN ELECTORAL REFORM PACKAGE WOULD BE AGREED TO. ALTHOUGH HIS GOVERNMENT IS READY TO CONCEDE SOME POINTS, I.E., EXTENSION OF THE RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENT TO FIVE OR SEVEN YEARS, HE IS CERTAIN THAT THE ISSUE OF REDISTRICTING AND OF LOWERING THE VOTING AGE WILL RESULT IN A STALEMATE. ON THE ISSUE OF
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INDEPENDENCE, THE PREMIER INFORMED ME THAT HIS PARTY MIGHT UPSTAGE THE OPPOSITION AND THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION BY HOLDING A REFERENDUM ON THAT ISSUE ALONE. HE IS CONFIDENT THAT A REFERENDUM ON AN INDEPENDENCE ISSUE HELD AT AN EARLY DATE WOULD RESULT IN A NEGATIVE VOTE.

B. UBP POLL OF MAY 1978- TO SUPPORT HIS PLAN FOR A POSSIBLE REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE OF INDEPENDENCE, THE PREMIER CONFIRMED REPORTS THE THE UBP SPONSORED CANVASS OF MAY 1978 INDICATED THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE WAS OPPOSED TO EARLY INDEPENDENCE. HE STATED THAT ALTHOUGH SOME SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY QUESTION THE CREDIBILITY OF THE PARTY CANVASS, (INCLUDING THE THEN PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER OF HIS OWN PARTY) HE PRESUMABLY WAS SATISFIED THAT IT REFLECTED A VALID CONSENSUS. HE FURTHER STATED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE POLL SHOWED THAT A MAJORITY OF THOSE CANVASSED WERE OPPOSED TO LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18 AND THAT CONSENSUS INDICATED THAT THERE WAS NO MAJORITY PRESSURE FOR ABOLITION OF THE EXPATRIATE VOTE. HE AGAIN STRESSED THAT HE, THEREFORE, CONSIDERED THAT THE PITT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS WERE GRATUITOUS AND UNSUBSTANTIATED BY GENERAL CONSENSUS ON THE ISLAND.

C. TELEPHONE SURVEY: THE PREMIER MINIMIZED THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS AUTHORIZING THE UBP TELEPHONE SURVEY OF JUNE 1978

STATING THAT CRITICISM WAS SHORT-LIVED AND THAT HIS PUBLIC STATEMENT EXPLAINING THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY WAS WELL RECEIVED. HE EMPHASIZED HIS POINT BY STATING THAT IN FACT 90 PERCENT OF THOSE CONTACTED EAGERLY PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY. HE CONFIRMED TO ME THAT THIS SURVEY WAS A PRELIMINARY STEP IN LONG RANGE UBP ENDEAVOR TO APPROACH 1980-81 XGDS-3

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 HAMILTON 404/2

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT, PINS, BD
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GENERAL ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN IN A MORE PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC MANNER. UBP HAS RETAINED NOTED NEW YORK BASED PUBLIC RELATIONS WIZARD DAVID GARTH TO ADVISE PARTY AND COORDINATE ITS CAMPAIGN FOR 1980-81 GENERAL ELECTION. GARTH, WHOSE FEE IS RUMORED TO RUN TO SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, IS THE PERSON WHO SUCCESSFULLY ENGINEERED THE KOCH MAYORAL CAMPAIGN IN NEW YORK CITY AND GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN OF BYRNE IN NEW JERSEY. (A SEPARATE CABLE ON THIS SUBJECT WILL BE TRANSMITTED.) ALTHOUGH THE PREMIER HAS ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED, HE INFORMED ME THAT THEY PRESENTED NO SURPRISES.
D. BY-ELECTIONS: PREVIOUSLY CLOSELY GUARDED REPORTS OF POSSIBLE BY-ELECTIONS FOR TWO, AND POSSIBLY THREE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEATS HAVE BECOME MORE GENERALLY CIRCULATED IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS JOHN STUBBS AND STANLEY RATTERAY HAVE BEEN LOBBYING FOR MONTHS FOR HOUSE SEATS IN THE PARISH OF PAGET EAST AND WEST RESPECTIVELY. AT ONE POINT THE INCUMBENTS OF THOSE TWO SEATS, DEFORREST

TRIMINGHAM AND DR. WILLIAM MASTERS, HAD REPORTEDLY AGREED TO STEP DOWN IN EXCHANGE FOR SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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DISSENSION WITHIN THE PARTY HIERARCHY REGARDING WHO SHOULD RUN FOR THE SEATS HAS CAUSED THE PREMIER TO QUOTE PUT THE WHOLE PROJECT ON A BACK-BURNER UNTIL AFTER THE FIRST OF NEXT YEAR UNQUOTE. THE QUESTION OF THE BY-ELECTION WARRANTS CLOSE SCRUTINY AS IT CAN EVENTUALLY PROVIDE A TELLING PICTURE OF WHAT IMAGE THE PARTY IS STRIVING FOR AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, MIGHT BE THE HARBINGER OF FUTURE DIVISEVENESS WITHIN THE UBP WHICH COULD POSE A REAL PROBLEM DURING THE COMING MONTHS AS BOTH PARTIES START OILING THE POLITICAL MACHINERY IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1980-81 GENERAL ELECTIONS.

5. COMMENT: DAVID GIBBONS IS COMING UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM FROM MEMBERS OF HIS OWN PARTY (INCLUDING THE DEPUTY PREMIER) OF BEING A ONE-MAN GOVERNMENT, CONFIDING IN ONLY A CHOSEN FEW OF HIS CABINET, (SWAN, VESEY AND PLOWMAN) AND, IN THE PROCESS, CREATING THE RISK OF THE SAME FACTIONALISM THAT FORCED THE RESIGNATION OF HIS PREDECESSOR. ALTHOUGH HE READILY DISCUSSED EACH SUBJECT I RAISED DURING OUR TALK AND INTRODUCED SOME OF HIS OWN, IT IS APPARENT THAT HE WAS GUARDED AND DEFENSIVE IN ADDRESSING SOME SUBJECTS AND CLEARLY AMBIGUOUS IN ADDRESSING OTHERS.

6. ON THE QUESTION OF THE PITT COMMISSION REPORT, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HE ACTUALLY SHARES THE VIEWS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE UBP HIERARCHY THAT THE REPORT DOES NOT ENHANCE THE IMAGE OF HIS PARTY AND THAT THE OPPOSITION PLP CLEARLY SCORED POLITICAL POINTS WITH ITS PUBLICATION. ALTHOUGH HE STATED THAT THE CONVENING OF THE COMMISSION WAS NECESSITATED BY THE DECEMBER DISTURBANCES, IT IS CLEAR THAT HAD HE FORECAST THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION (CHAired BY A BLACK MEMBER OF THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY) AND ITS EVENTUAL FINDINGS, HE WOULD HAVE CERTAINLY TAKEN AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH.

7. AFTER CONFIDING TO ME THAT THE RECOMMENDATION FOR INDEPENDENCE WAS AUTHORED BY AN OFFICER OF THE FCO, I ASKED IF HE INTERPRETED THAT AS AN INDICATION OF FUTURE PRESSURES

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FROM LONDON TO MOVE FORWARD ON THE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE. HE UNCONVINCINGLY STATED THIS WAS NOT NECESSARILY SO, AS THE OFFICIAL U.K. POSITION, AS CONVEYED THROUGH THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, IS THAT IT IS UP TO THE BERMUDIAN PEOPLE TO SET THEIR OWN PACE TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT. I SHARE THE LOCAL CONSENSUS THAT THE INCLUSION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IS LIKELY THE BEGINNING OF A RESURGING U.K. POSTURE TO URGE ITS

COLONY TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE. AN ANALYSIS OF THE PITT COMMISSION REPORT WILL BE TRANSMITTED BY AIRGRAM.

8. CONCLUSION: IT SHOULD BE CLEAR FROM THE FOREGOING THAT THIS HAS NOT BEEN A PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGING SUMMER FOR EITHER THE UBP AS A PARTY, OR FOR DAVID GIBBONS PERSONALLY. ALTHOUGH NOT READILY APPARENT TO THE AVERAGE OBSERVER UNFAMILIAR WITH THE NUANCES AND SUBTLETIES EXISTENT HERE, IN THE MICROCOSMIC CONTEXT OF THIS SMALL ISLAND, THE ITEMS REPORTED PORTEND SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE UBP AND CONSEQUENTLY FOR U.S. INTERESTS HERE, THE PITT COMMISSION REPORT (REALISTICALLY OR NOT) SUP-

PORTS TRADITIONAL PLP ALLEGATIONS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UNJUSTICES ON THE ISLAND AND HAS CLEARLY PUT THE UBP ON A VERY INSECURE DEFENSIVE POLITICALLY. THE PREMIER FINDS HIMSELF IN THE PRECARIOUS "DAMNED IF HE DOES, DAMNED IF HE DOESN'T" DILEMMA OF EITHER IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDED REFORMS AND THUS RISKING A VERY SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO HIS PARTY IN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION OR IGNORING SOME OR ALL OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUFFER A GENERAL BACKLASH FOR HIS INACTION. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PLP HAS FOUND IN THE PITT REPORT AN EFFECTIVE VEHICLE TO PUSH FOR REFORMS THAT WOULD CERTAINLY ENHANCE ITS POLITICAL POSITION, AND THE SNIPING HAS ALREADY BEGUN BOTH IN PARTY SPONSORED PUBLIC MEETINGS AND IN PRESS RELEASES THROUGHT THE LOCAL MEDIA.

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